

**Pols 301, 1.1** updated 1/26/05

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Spring 2005

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Class meetings: MW 2:15-4:05, DBH **113**

**Methods & Practice of Political Science**

Phone :726-2179

Office: DBH 108

Office Hours: T 3-4:00, W 1-2:00

& by appointment

### **Required Readings:**

Janet Johnson and H. T. Reynolds 2005 *Political Science Research Methods, 5th ed.*

Michael Corbett 2001 *Research Methods in Political Science, 5th ed.*

Other readings may be assigned by the instructor.

### **Course Description**

This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to the research methods most commonly used to study political phenomenon. Our focus will be on the *how* rather than the *what* of political research. This course will cover every step of the research process. Students will explore the relationship between theory and research, research design, data collection, measurement, and descriptive and inferential statistics. Students will conduct original research using real data.

### **Course Objectives**

After completing this course, students should be able to:

1. Summarize the process knowledge accumulation in the social sciences.
2. Identify the central fallacies and sources of error that inhibit the research process.
3. Explain the relationship between assumptions and findings.
4. Evaluate critically the research of others.
5. Generate and complete a research design on a topic of interest to the student.
6. Assess the validity and reliability of that research.

### **Course Requirements**

1) This course combines lecture, discussion, and student research. Students must be prepared for class, completing readings before class meetings. Students are expected to participate in class discussions. Online requirements may be found in the classes WebCT area:

<http://webct.samford.edu:8900/webct/public/home.pl>

2) Attendance is required. After the third, each additional cut will result in a 5-point reduction in **final** grade. Three tardies equal one absence. Absences may be excused if the student provides verifiable documentation of accident, illness, official university duties, or legal obligation. Students are responsible for any announcements made in class.

3) Cheating and plagiarism are unacceptable. Discussing specific quiz or exercise answers before submission by either party is cheating. All submissions must be original with sources clearly and correctly documented. Work previously submitted for other courses is not acceptable. Any student who represents the work of another as his or her own is guilty of plagiarism and will be subject to the penalties outlined in the Student Handbook (see *Samford University 2004-2005 Student Handbook & Academic Planner*, pg. 118 & 171), including expulsion from the course and the University. All major assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

4) Students will be evaluated on their performance on bibliographies, homework assignments, class participation, a research project, a midterm exam and a final exam. There will be no extra credit.

Bibliographies	10%
Presentations	05%
Homework	10%
Research Project	15%
Quizzes	10%
Class Participation	10%
Exams (3)	30%
Final Exam	10%
Total	100%

**Grades**, in ascending order:

greater than 60%= D-	greater than 63.3%= D	greater than 66.6%= D+
greater than 70%= C	greater than 73.3%= C	greater than 76.6%= C+
greater than 80%= B-	greater than 83.3%= B	greater than 86.6%= B+
greater than 90%= A-	greater than 93.3%= A	

**Bibliographies:** Students are expected to conduct independent research throughout the semester. Each week students will submit an annotated bibliography of outside material they have read for that week. Students may choose the research articles listed in the syllabus and on reserve or articles on any politically relevant topic from mainstream social science journals; Corbett makes useful suggestions at the end of each chapter. Bibliographies may not exceed one physical page, but should include full citation and evaluation. Additionally, students must include a photocopy of the first page of the journal article. Helpful hint: Save time and effort by choosing articles that address the topic of your research project.

**Exams:** The midterm and the final exam will cover all material addressed in the lectures, readings and discussion. Absences on exam days may be excused by the instructor only if the student provides verifiable documentation of accident, illness, or legal obligation. Unexcused absences from examinations will result in a score of zero for that exam. Make-up exams for excused absences will be by arrangement with the instructor within one week of the exam date.

**Quizzes:** Regular quizzes will give students a chance to monitor their mastery of the material.

**Research project:** Students will write a research paper on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor. The paper will be 10-15 double-spaced typed pages long. A proposal and bibliography are due 5 April. Students will present their research to the class in weeks 15 and 16. Papers are due on 11 May. Late papers will be penalized one letter grade for each day late. Papers are evaluated on grammar, style, spelling, diction, punctuation, and methodological competence.

**Presentations:** Each student will make a presentation to the class of his or her political research. Students are expected to attend the presentations of others and offer helpful suggestions.

**Participation:** Students are responsible for full participation in the class. This includes making thoughtful contributions to class discussions. Additionally, some class time will be dedicated to group activity and plenary reports of that activity. The readings in this syllabus represent a framework, the bare minimum of required. Students are expected to identify, digest, and present issues and ideas from outside reading. A tally of the number of positive contributions made by each student will be kept and used as an aid in calculating class participation grades. In addition to participation during class meetings, students may respond to or volunteer contributions to the class's threaded message board on WebCT. Your original contributions and responses in the discussion area will be evaluated in terms of frequency, quality, content, grammar and style.

**Late assignments:** Late assignments are penalized one full letter grade for each day late. *Exercises from the Corbett book must be submitted online one hour before class the day they are due, typically the second class of the week.* All work must be submitted by 5/11 to receive a passing grade in the course. No work will be accepted after 5/11.

### Class Schedule

<b>Week 1</b> 1/26	Introduction
<b>Week 2</b> 1/31 Overview	Corbett 1 (exercise due 2/2); Johnson 1-2
<b>Week 3</b> 2/07 -- Concepts and Dimensional Thinking	Corbett 2, Johnson 4:123-128, 6:153-168 Research Article: Choose an article from Corbett's "For Further Reading" (p. 32).
<b>Week 4</b> 2/14 -- Measurement	Corbett 3; Johnson 3, 5, 6:168-183 Research Article: Choose an article from Corbett's "For Further Reading" or find your own.
<b>Week 5</b> 2/21 -- Hypotheses	Corbett 4-5 ( <i>due Monday</i> ); Johnson 4:103-123 <a href="#">Hypotheses exercise</a> ; <b>Exam 1</b>
<b>Required Research Articles:</b> <a href="#">Stack &amp; Gundlach 1992 "The Effect of Country Music on Suicide." <i>Social Forces</i> 71:211-18</a> and responses by <a href="#">Maguire &amp; Snipes 1994</a> , <a href="#">Mauk et al. 1994</a> , and <a href="#">Stack &amp; Gundlach 1994</a> . <a href="#">Maguire &amp; Snipes 1995</a> , <a href="#">Stack and Gunblach 1995</a>	
<b>Week 6</b> 2/28 -- Sampling and Data Collection	Corbett 6-7; Johnson 7, 9

Research Article: For this and subsequent weeks, choose an article from Corbett's "For Further Reading" or find your own.

<b>Week 7</b> 3/07 -- Univariate Analysis	Corbett 8; Johnson 8, 11; <a href="#">Variance Self Assessment</a> , <a href="#">Univariate Exercise</a>
<b>Week 8</b> 3/14--	Johnson 10; <a href="#">Second Univariate Exercise</a> ; <b>Exam 2 3/16</b>
<b>Week 9</b> 3/21 Spring Break	No Class
<b>Week 10</b> 3/30-- Bivariate Analysis	Corbett 9; Johnson 12:339-352
<b>Week 11</b> 4/4	Corbett 10; Johnson 12:352-366
<b>Week 12</b> 4/11 -- Inference	Corbett 11; Johnson 13:403-417
<b>Week 13</b> 4/18 Categorical Control Variables	Corbett 12; Johnson 12:366-400; <a href="#">control variable exercise</a>
<b>Week 14</b> 4/25 -- Multivariate Analysis	Corbett 13; Johnson 13:417-451, <b>Exam 3 4/27</b>
<b>Week 15</b> 5/2	Student Projects
<b>Week 16</b> 5/09 Last class 11 May	Student Projects
<b>Final Exam:</b> Wednesday 18 May <b>1:00-3:00</b> pm	Clear thinking requires adequate sleep.

Samford University complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations must make their request by contacting Disability Support Services, located in Counseling Services on the lower level of Pittman Hall (telephone number: 726-4078 or 726-2105). A faculty member will grant reasonable accommodations only upon written notification from Disability Support Services.